

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 OMB-01 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3847 IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: MAKEUP OF NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT

REF: BANGKOK 26718

SUMMARY: MAKEUP OF NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT FLUID, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS CERTAIN THAT SENI WILL CONTINUE AS PRIME MINISTER. POSSIBILITY STILL EXISTS THAT SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) MAY BE COALITION PARTNER. NSCT HAS ORGANIZED ANTI-THANOM RALLY FOR AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 25. END OF SUMMARY.

1. PROCESS OF FORMATION OF A NEW CABINET CONTINUES WITH SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE UTHAI PHIMCHAICHON, ACTING IN HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE, SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH THE KING

SEPT 25 TO RECOMMEND SENI PRAMOT AS NEW PRIME MINISTER. KING IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE THIS RECOMMENDATION.

2. DOUBTS HAVE BEEN RAISED ABOUT PRIME MINISTER M R SENI PRAMOT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF SEPT 24 THAT THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT THAT HE WILL HEAD WILL CONSIST OF THE SAME PARTNERS. ACCORDING TO THE SEPT 25 NATION, THE DEMOCRAT CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECIDED LATE SEPT 24 THAT THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD BE IN THE COALITION WAS STILL OPEN. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE A COMMITTEE HEADED BY SENI AND INCLUDING THE FOUR DEPUTY PARTY LEADERS AND THE PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL, WILL DRAFT A SET OF FIRM POLICIES WHICH POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNERS MUST AGREE TO BEFORE THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO JOIN IN A COALITION WITH THE DEMOCRATS.

3. THE PROGRESSIVE FACTION OF THE DEMOCRATS HAS BEEN UNHAPPY WITH BOTH THE THAI NATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTIES OVER THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD HANDLING OF BOTH THE THANOM AND PRAPHAT AFFAIRS. THEY WERE ALSO INCENSED AT WHAT THEY CONSIDERED A "STAB IN THE BACK" WHEN THEIR COALITION PARTNERS VOTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT ON THE MATTER OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT THESE DEMOCRATS WANTED TO DUMP BOTH PARTNERS, ESPECIALLY THE THAI NATION PARTY, AND SUBSTITUTE THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) AS A COALITION PARTNER. THE CONFERENCES THAT BUNTHENG THONGSAWAT, SAP DEPUTY PARTY LEADER AND M R KHUKRIT PRAMOT, SAP PARTY LEADER HELD WITH MR SENI ON SEPT 24 AFTER SENI'S RESIGNATION ADDED FUEL TO THESE RUMORS. HOWEVER THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY ARE STRONGLY RESISTING THE OUSTER OF THE THAI NATION PARTY AND THE SUBSTITUTION OF SAP IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT COALITION AS ENTRY OF THE SAP WOULD REQUIRE RECONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AND A NEW DIVISION OF CABINET PORTFOLIOS, WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS FOR THEIR INTERESTS.

5. MP'S WITH WHOM THE CHIEF POLITICAL ASSISTANT SPOKE ON SEPT 24 BELIEVED THE DEMOCRATS WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ULTIMATELY DUMP THE THAI NATION PARTY AND INCLUDE SAP IN THE NEW COALITION. THEY WERE SURPRISED AND SKEPTICAL AT SENI'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIST OF THE OLD COALITION PARTNERS.

6. THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) HAS ORGANIZED A RALLY FOR THE AFTERNOON OF SEPT 25 TO PROTEST AGAINST THE RETURN OF THANOM. THE RALLY ITS

FIRST MAJOR PUBLIC PROTEST, WILL BE HELD AT CHULALONGKON UNIVERSITY. AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST IN BANGKOK TOLD POLOFF ON SEPT 25 THAT NSCT LEADERS HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE NSCT HAD SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO STUDENT ACTIVIST GROUPS THROUGHOUT THAILAND TWO DAYS AGO TO ASK THEM TO BE PREPARED FOR NATIONWIDE ANTI-THANOM CAMPAIGN. THEY DID NOT SAY WHEN THIS WOULD TAKE PLACE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE AMERICAN MEDIA WILL COVER THIS RALLY. ADDRESSEES MAY THEREFORE GET EXAGGERATED COVERAGE OF THIS EVENT ESPECIALLY IF VIOLENCE OCCURS. STUDENTS WILL PROBABLY MOBILIZE A FEW THOUSAND PARTICIPANTS. UNLESS THEY CAN GET OUT A LARGER CROWD THEY WILL HAVE MINIMAL IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

7. COMMENT: THE SITUATION IS STILL FLUID, THOUGH IT REMAINS CERTAIN THAT SENI WILL CONTINUE AS PRIME MINISTER. AT A MINIMUM, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE SOME CHANGES IN THE CABINET. PROSPECTS OF A DEMOCRAT-SAP COALITION ARE NOT RPT NOT EXCLUDED, BUT EXTENDED NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE REQUIRED TO BRING ABOUT SUCH A GROUPING WHICH, THEORETICALLY, WOULD HAVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (TOTAL OF 160 SEATS OUT OF 279-MEMBER HOUSE). HOWEVED THE PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING SUCH A GROUPING WHICH HAS LONG BEEN ADVOCATED TURNS ON RELATIONS BETWEEN SENI PROMOT AND HIS BROTHER, SAP LEADER AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT. RRESUMABLY, HJUKRIT, AS, LEADER OF THE SMALLER SAP, WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT, SECOND PLACE TO SENI, HIS ELDER BROTHER AND LEADER OF THE LARGER DEMOCRAT PARTY. THIS HAS SEEMED UNACCEPTABLE TO HIM, AT LEAST UP TO NOW, AND WE ARE NOT RPT NOT AWARE THAT THIS PROBLEM HAS BEEN RESOLVED.

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